

12th imMed PhD Retreat: Science and a lot of fun!

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The 12th edition of the imMed Program Retreat was set at the Youth Hostel «Am Land» in Solothurn. On the morning of June 13, 2017 we met at Zurich HB to take the train together. Everyone was excited and knew that this event would not only be the opportunity to meet other PhD students and talk about our projects but also set aside the lab routine for two days. At the Youth Hostel Solothurn we were welcomed with delicious Gipfeli, juice and coffee to boost our energy for the scientific sessions. The high quality talks were the opportunity to enjoy the diversity of the research topics within the imMed Program. It was also a great chance for us to see examples of how to overcome potential obstacles in animal experimentation. Many thanks to Lalita Oparija, Jakub Smolar and Zhuolun Song who nicely chaired the talk sessions. In addition 15 posters were presented over lunchtime and presenters were all willing to explain their work and answer questions. It was an excellent opportunity for us to network and discuss aspects of our research beside the posters.

The question/answer session with imMed director Christian Grimm provided a lot of helpful information on various administrative topics. Anna Mallone, our student representative for almost three years, presented her successor Urs Wegmann who started his PhD at the Institute of Physiology this spring. Thank you very much for your support, Anna, and welcome, Urs! Tobias Hasler, the new chair of the or-



ganizing committee of the “Vision 2020 – a personal perspective” was presenting the seminar series and Jakub Smolar from the LSZYSN (Life Science Zurich Young Scientist Network) introduced us to this organization which supports PhD students and postdocs in their career planning.

Before the talks from our guest speakers started, we got snacks and drinks and had a bit of time to relax. Some went for a swim in the river Aare, others for a walk in the lovely centre of Solothurn, everyone enjoying the sunny and hot weather and the beautiful setting.

Then, exactly at 17:00 h, everyone gathered back in the seminar room where we had the great honour to meet our guest speakers, **Marcel Hug** and **Joëlle Flück**. We were witnessing Marcel’s most impressive life journey from his childhood all the way to becoming a Paralympics Champion in Rio in 2016 and winner of the Marathon Major Series. imMed alumna Joëlle, an elite track athlete herself, who works in Sports Medicine at the Swiss Paraplegic Centre in Nottwil gave us an insight into her everyday life “from performance to science”. In the very lively open discussion, topics such as how

to go a step further, to overcome obstacles and mental training were covered.

At the great dinner at the Youth Hostel, Zhuolun Song received the best poster award for “Melatonin Promotes Graft Regeneration after Small-for-Size Liver Transplantation” and Susan Ghazi the award for best presentation for “Investigating novel aspects of mitochondrial function in the kidney collecting duct”. Congratulations to the two of you!

On the second day we went uphill to the Seilpark Balmberg. The journey was quite pleasant, with amazing landscape views. The following activities gave everybody an adrenaline rush. Climbing the black level route made the hearts of the even bravest colleagues pump. We finished our retreat with a barbecue and delicious homemade Swiss cakes, desserts and sweets at the nearby farm.

Overall, the retreat was amazing: We had the opportunity to interact with other PhD students and got to know their work. Finally, we would like to thank both Program Director Christian Grimm and Coordinator Heidi Preisig for organising such a great event.

→ [Photo gallery](#)